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Apostolical Baptism,
considered
In Few Words,

by

C. P.



"But what saith the Scripture."—Rom. iv. 3.

"And His disciples remembered that it was written."—John ii. 17.

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**NOTE.—J. J. GUILLAUME UNDERTAKES THE PUBLICATION OF NEW
WORKS IN THE BEST MANNER AND ON MODERATE TERMS.**

PREFACE.

THE recent appeal to the Privy Council touching a charge of heresy on the question of Christian Baptism has naturally led to much conversation in private circles.

The Author has heard a good deal of "What says the Church"? but very little of "What saith the Scriptures"? and concludes, that in offering a brief summary of Scriptural teaching and Scripture records to the attention of those interested in the subject, the true interests of the Church will be best considered, and that earnest affection shown, which best becomes her children.

Apostolical Baptism.

FROM a very early period of the earth's history, we learn that God has chosen to separate, by an outward sign, those who have professed to worship Him from those who have made to themselves other gods, and so rejected Him.

The covenant made by God with Abraham and his seed after him, received the sign of Circumcision, which sign was to be kept, by being executed on every male child, as soon



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faith which should exercise practical influences over life,—and promising blessings which had the “promise of “ this life as well as of that which is “ to come.” And the Gospel sign is one of pleasure,—an ablution, sought after as a gratification, and good for health; but no precise time is fixed for its accomplishment.

And then, connected with the act of obedience is the promise of a blessing. God takes His share in the sign of the second covenant. Let man baptize with water, and He will baptize with the Spirit.

But yet, neither has he set a *limit of time* to *His own* share of the covenant sign. God has not declared that the *Spirit* shall be given at the precise moment at which it shall please man

to give the *water*. He has not made His Holy Spirit subservient to man's caprice. He has not reduced His own beautiful and simple covenant-rite to a mere incantation, so that man can summon the Divine Spirit at his pleasure. On the contrary, it appears from the early records of baptism, contained in the New Testament, that man's portion of the covenant sign,—the act of obedience, the baptism of water, — is sometimes *accompanied*, sometimes *preceded*, and sometimes *followed*, by God's portion,—the portion of blessing on obedience,—the baptism of the Spirit. And God thus asserts His own sovereignty, and His supreme right to do what He will, *when* He will,—*when*, in His infinite wisdom and mercy, He sees fit.

Thus we find in the Scripture records, that—

I. Our Saviour, our Great Exemplar, whom “it behoved to be made like unto his brethren,” (Heb. ii. 17,) “and to fulfil all righteousness,” (Matt. iii. 14, 15), at His baptism received the Spirit as He came out of the water; so that He was at the *same time* “baptized of water and of the Spirit.” (Matt. iii. 16).

II. St. Paul received the Holy Ghost, and recovered his bodily sight, and *then* he was baptized. (Acts ix. 17, 18). And Cornelius, with his kinsmen and near friends received the Holy Ghost, and afterwards were baptized with water, *because* they had already received the Spirit. “Can “any man forbid water, that these

“should not be baptized, which have
“received the Holy Ghost as well as
“we?” (Acts x. 44—48).

III. Philip preached at Samaria. Many who had hitherto been bewitched by the sorceries of Simon believed Philip, and *were baptized*. Then, *afterwards*, came Peter and John, and “prayed for them, that they might “receive the Holy Ghost; (for as yet “*He was fallen upon none of them; “only they were baptized* in the name “of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they “their hands upon them, and they “received the Holy Ghost.” (Acts viii. 8—17).

Again,—St. Paul found disciples at Ephesus. He enquired whether they had received the Holy Ghost. They had never so much as heard of the

Holy Ghost. Paul taught them of Jesus;— they were baptized in His name, and then, “when Paul had laid “hands on them, the Holy Ghost “came on them.” (Acts xix. 1—6).

We learn, then, that the baptism by water is man's duty, because God's command; and that the baptism by the Spirit is man's privilege, because God's grace. He commands the one, and promises the other; and, as He infallibly blesses His own ordinances, those who obey the command, trusting for the promise, will surely receive it.

But it is also evident, that we “tarry the Lord's leisure” for the hour of its bestowal. We must obey and wait. We dare not presume to define when it shall be bestowed, or to dogmatize as to His secret councils.

There is a highly respectable body of Christians who consider it wrong to baptize infants, because they are incapable of faith. They cannot, like adults, "*believe* and be baptized." But every argument on this ground they could use, which would apply to Baptism, might by fair analogy be applied also to Circumcision. It was a sign of separation. It was a pledge to serve the Lord, and not Baal. It was a promise of obedience. Yet, to the Israelitish infant of eight days old, who could say "*Obey*, and be circum-
"cised"? Is, then, obedience to a ceremonial law more adapted to the powers, to the *will* and *affections* of a child of eight days old, than a law of love and belief? Is there anything in the one which renders it more easily

applicable to the undeveloped intelligence, than can be found in the other?

Some such impression as that which oppresses the views of these Christians—some such doubts of the capacity of a child to believe, seem to have clouded the minds of the apostles when they rebuked the Hebrew mothers for bringing their children to their Saviour. His reply might have set the question at rest,—for, in His gracious welcome of these little ones, in His displeasure at their rejection, in His instant correction of the blunder made by His disciples, He seems to say—“What! Shall children, who
“were admitted to share a covenant of
“works, be rejected from a covenant
“of love? Shall they partake the rite
“of pain, and be denied the pure

“ water for cleansing ? Shall they
“ tremble under Moses, and not be
“ permitted to rejoice in Me, their
“ Saviour ? Shall mothers be called
“ on, under heavy penalties, to teach
“ their little ones the long list of
“ punishments awaiting transgressions,
“ and shall they be commanded to
“ withhold from them the sign, that
“ there are blessings greater than the
“ imagination of man can conceive,
“ laid up in heaven by God, for them
“ that love Him ? ‘ Suffer little chil-
“ ‘ dren to come unto me, and forbid
“ ‘ them not, for of such is the king-
“ ‘ dom of God. Verily, I say unto
“ ‘ you, whosoever shall not receive
“ ‘ the kingdom of God as a little
“ ‘ child, he shall not enter therein.
“ ‘ And He took them up in His

“ ‘ arms, put His hands upon them,
“ ‘ and blessed them.’ ” (Mark x.
13—16).

In the baptism of children, as of adults, it is clear that the child is “regenerate,” having been “born again “of *water*”; but it does not follow as an absolute certainty in the one case, any more than in the other, that it is *at the same time* “born again of the “*Spirit*,” though, in the strong language of faith, from the certainty of God’s fulfilling, *at some time*, His part of the covenant, it may be *said* to be so. The inheritance is insured, but the child may or may not come into *immediate* possession.

But again—Can a child *receive* the gift of the new birth of the Spirit? It may as well be asked, Can an infant

be the possessor of an immortal soul? Can it possess intellect, intelligence, talents, and affections? These are all equally the gift of God; all spiritual in their nature; all require an advanced age, and a certain state of maturity, before they can act and develope themselves,—or, Is a child *destitute* of them, till he uses and exhibits them?

What is there, then, to constitute a child incapable of being a recipient of the grace which is to purify and animate the immaterial and immortal soul, as well as of the soul itself?

The Divine Spirit, we may well conceive, can as easily *make its home* in the heart of a young child, as *remain* in the heart of a sleeping man. The physical nature of the one is

as dormant as that of the other,—and yet in both the Spirit develops itself through physical agencies. If the Spirit be content to remain latent in the one case, why not in the other?

We have here traced a plain chain of *facts*, from which we derive the Scripture doctrine of Baptism, and it may be reduced to heads, thus:—

God chooses to have *His* people distinguished by a sign.

Under the Law, the sign was Circumcision.

Under the Gospel, it is Baptism, or the being “born again of water and of the Spirit.”

To be born of water is a duty.

To be born of the Spirit is a blessing.

Children were considered eligible to receive the sign of Circumcision.

Children are, by analogy, considered eligible to receive the sign of Baptism.

Children were not *forbidden* to be baptized. When apostles drove away children from the presence of Christ, He rebuked them, invited the children to Him, took them in His arms, *laid hands on them*, and blessed them.

There is no express time fixed for the being "born of water."

There is no express time fixed for the being "born of the Spirit."

The records of the early baptisms shew that the birth by water was sometimes *accompanied*, sometimes *preceded*, and sometimes *followed*, by the birth of the Spirit.

So that the term "regenerate" is

correct of baptism, inasmuch as the baptized is "born again of water," but can only be used with reference to the birth of the "Spirit" by faith, which is to us "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

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